

Chapter 25

The Mexican View of the War

(1850)

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Introduction

President Polk of the United States tried to justify the War with Mexico in 1846 as a response to a Mexican invasion. The United States completely defeated the Mexicans on the field and succeeded in taking possession of one-third of Mexico in their peace treaty. The Mexican perspective on the war was notably different. From their point of view, their republic was invaded by their aggressive northern neighbor. After the war, the editors of several Mexican newspapers collaborated on a history of the conflict, which was translated into English and published in New York.

Questions to Consider

- What, in the Mexican editors' view, caused the war with the United States?
- Did they see a pattern in U.S. history?
- Was Mexico entirely blameless?

Source

To contemplate the state of degradation and ruin to which the mournful war with the United States has reduced the Republic, is painful. Nor is it pleasant to take a retrospective glance in the investigation of the causes which led to this complete overthrow. But without some explanation of the circumstances which brought on hostilities, our work would be imperfect, and would be wanting in clearness and in those acts which ought to be presented to the examination of the civilized world. It is to be hoped that the hard lesson which we have received will teach us to reform our conduct; oblige us to adopt the obvious precautions against its repetition; benefit us by being made acquainted with its bitter fruits; induce us not to forget the mistakes we have committed; and prepare us to stay the impending blows with which ambition and treachery threaten us. The Mexican Republic, to whom nature had been prodigal, and full of those elements which make a great and happy nation, had among other misfortunes of less account, the great one of being in the vicinity of a strong and energetic people. Emancipated from the parent country, yet wanting in that experience not to be acquired while the reins of her destiny were in foreign hands and involved for many years in the whirlwind of never ending revolutions, the country offered an easy conquest to any who might desire to employ against her a respectable force. The disadvantage of her position could not be concealed from the keen sight of the United States, who watched for the favorable moment for their project. For a long time this was carried on secretly, and with caution, until in despair, tearing off the mask, they exposed the plans without disguise of their bold and overbearing policy.

1 To explain then in a few words the true origin of the war, it is sufficient to say that the insatiable
2 ambition of the United States, favored by our weakness, caused it. But this assertion, however
3 veracious and well founded, requires the confirmation which we will present, along with some
4 former transactions, to the whole world. This evidence will leave no doubt of the correctness of
5 our impressions.

6
7 In throwing off the yoke of the mother country, the United States of the North appeared at once
8 as a powerful nation. This was the result of their excellent elementary principles of government
9 established while in colonial subjection. The Republic announced at its birth, that it was called
10 upon to represent an important part in the world of Columbus. Its rapid advancement, its
11 progressive increase, its wonderful territory, the uninterrupted augmentation of its inhabitants,
12 and the formidable power it had gradually acquired, were many proofs of its becoming a
13 colossus, not only for the feeble nations of Spanish America, but even for the old populations of
14 the ancient continent.

15
16 The United States did not hope for the assistance of time in their schemes of aggrandizement.
17 From the days of their independence they adopted the project of extending their dominions, and
18 since then, that line of policy has not deviated in the slightest degree. This conduct, nevertheless,
19 was not perceptible to the most enlightened: but reflecting men, who examined events, were not
20 slow in recognizing it. Conde de Aranda, from whose perception the ends which the United
21 States had resolved upon were not concealed, made use of some celebrated words.... "This nation
22 has been born a pigmy: in the time to come, it will be a giant, and even a colossus very
23 formidable in these vast regions. Its first step will be an appropriation of the Floridas to be
24 master of the Gulf of Mexico."

25
26 The ambition of the North Americans has not been in conformity with this. They desired from
27 the beginning to extend their dominion in such manner as to become the absolute owners of
28 almost all this continent. In two ways they could accomplish their ruling passion: in one by
29 bringing under their laws and authority all America to the Isthmus of Panama; in another, in
30 opening an overland passage to the Pacific Ocean, and making good harbors to facilitate its
31 navigation. By this plan, establishing in some way an easy communication of a few days
32 between both oceans, no nation could compete with them. England herself might show her
33 strength before yielding the field to her fortunate rival, and the mistress of the commercial world
34 might for a while be delayed in touching the point of greatness to which she aspires.

35
36 In the short space of some three quarters of a century events have verified the existence of these
37 schemes and their rapid development. The North American Republic has already absorbed
38 territories pertaining to Great Britain, France, Spain, and Mexico. It has employed every means
39 to accomplish this - purchase as well as usurpation, skill as well as force, and nothing has
40 restrained it when treating of territorial acquisition. Louisiana, the Floridas, Oregon, and Texas,
41 have successively fallen into its power. It now has secured the possession of the Californias,
42 New Mexico, and a great part of other States and Territories of the Mexican Republic. Although
43 we may desire to close our eyes with the assurance that these pretensions have now come to an
44 end, and that we may enjoy peace and unmoved tranquillity for a long time, still the past history
45 has an abundance of matter to teach us as yet existing, what has existed, the same schemes of
46 conquest in the United States. The attempt has to be made, and we will see ourselves

1 overwhelmed anew, sooner or later, in another or in more than one disastrous war until the flag
2 of the stars floats over the last span of territory which it so much covets.

3
4 These considerations are indeed mournful; but their certainty can be demonstrated with clearness
5 in proportion to the attention given to their examination. We have observed the constant aim of
6 our neighbor republic. We have fixed upon the period of its independence as a point of interest,
7 after which, as a settled policy, it contemplated this vast dominion. But if we look back upon
8 even earlier times, we will observe that the first settlers of the United States pursued the same
9 ends, and that the descendants of Washington do no more than imitate the conduct of their
10 forefathers.

11
12 In truth, subjects of the British throne, whom the religious and political convulsions of their
13 country obliged to seek in distant climes the enjoyment of liberty of conscience and the
14 tranquillity of a peaceful government, established themselves in the territories of North America.
15 Here they did not hesitate to appropriate the possessions of the unhappy natives, that they might
16 change the sickly plant into a vigorous tree with thick foliage and branches, and whose roots
17 would shoot out to a great distance. Then, as now, every method was deemed equally fair; every
18 resource adopted, from the legal purchase of lands, to the taking them by the total extermination
19 of tribes. It is worth noting, however, that in their choice of expedients they preferred those
20 which had the charm of violence. Few indeed followed in the footsteps of the venerable William
21 Penn.

22
23 [T]hat which the United States desired was the interesting acquisition of Louisiana. This
24 province, of which Spain was in possession,...passed into the power of France in the year 1800,
25 by the treaty of S. Ildefonso.... Louisiana having returned to France, the American government
26 soon had an understanding with that nation for its acquisition. Purchase was then the road
27 adopted for the increase of territory.... Here it ought to be noted, as an interesting fact, that in the
28 cession made by Spain to France it had not been thought to mark the limits of this province.
29 Although they had been settled in the treaty of peace at Paris in 1763, this forgetfulness or
30 neglect gave rise immediately to grave questions....

31
32 The acquisition of Louisiana ought to be considered of immense importance to the United States:
33 for by it their territory was doubled. This country, which, under the Spanish laws, was so far
34 from producing any advantages, as to be actually both prejudicial and a burden, was converted
35 into an inexhaustible fountain of riches, in their industrious and energetic hands....

36
37 By a remarkable contrast, this acquisition was to us a disastrous event, in giving us a neighbor
38 very little to be desired. It was only one step from Louisiana to Texas. The sale of this colony
39 had broken a barrier that still restrained the torrent that soon would overflow Mexico.

40
41 The North Americans, intent on their plans of absorption, as soon as they saw themselves
42 masters of Louisiana, spread their snares at once for the rest of the Floridas, and the province of
43 Texas: both of which countries yet remained under the Spanish power.... Skill and open force
44 supplied them with arms against a nation declining from the power and glory which had made it
45 at one period the first in the world. At this time Spain was unable to defend her colonies beyond
46 the sea; for she had to employ all her resources to repel from her soil the invasion of a stranger.

1 In fact, the situation of Spain was very favorable for the ambitious views of the Republic of
2 Washington. Rightly appreciating the terrible crisis through which she was passing, it sent
3 agents, spies, and emissaries, to Mexico, Venezuela, Santa Fe, and other points, to collect facts
4 and dates, and to open a road which would then facilitate its plans. Prior to this, frequent
5 explorations had been made to obtain geographical information and statistics. The travels of
6 Captains Pike, Lewis, and Clarke, had contributed much to it. With this knowledge, then, of all
7 that had gone before, there was nothing at present wanting more than a fit opportunity. The
8 invasion of the Peninsula by the French presented a favorable time.

9
10 Thus, without Spain having given any cause for complaint, in the midst of profound peace, and
11 without a previous declaration of war, American authorities prepared a revolt and their troops to
12 march in 1810 into the district of Baton Rouge, and in 1812 into the district of Mobile, by using
13 the same conduct which was afterwards observed in Texas. To extenuate the scandalous outrage
14 which had been committed, the President declared that these territories belonged to them as
15 integral parts of Louisiana.... General Jackson advanced to Pensacola, and in the meantime
16 another body of troops penetrated into East Florida. Next followed the occupation of Amalia
17 island; and then the taking of the forts of St. Marks and Barrancas. All these acts of hostility with
18 a proneness to repeat them were committed against a nation with which they lived in peace. The
19 evils which are inevitable in war...were aggravated by the cruelty which in these campaigns
20 General Jackson inflicted on the unhappy natives....

21
22 While the North American government thus encroached slowly on the Floridas, it was not idle in
23 regard to Texas; but simultaneously meditated its occupation, since already we have observed it
24 to undertake both at once.... This province belonged to the crown of Spain, which possessed
25 establishments there even in the sixteenth century, a little while after the conquest of the
26 Mexican empire. Afterwards in the year 1689, Captain D. Alonso de Leon, who was then
27 governor of Coahuila, received an order from the viceroy,...to make a reconnaissance of the bay
28 of Espiritu Santo,...took possession of the country, and founded the mission of San Francisco of
29 Texas. The king of Spain, hearing of these things and knowing their importance, commanded, in
30 a royal letter of...1692, that he would effect new discoveries and undertake the navigation of the
31 River Codachos. New expeditions followed, which resulted in the establishments of La
32 Purissima, Conception, San José, Maria Santisima Guadalupe, and others. In this way, without
33 any opposition, and using the right which nations recognised in those times for the acquisition of
34 countries, the monarchs of Spain made themselves masters of the whole province of Texas.

35
36 ...Texas has over the greater part of Mexico the advantage of inclosing within its borders,
37 beautiful and navigable rivers, the only blessing wanting in almost all the other parts of our
38 richly endowed country. Texas, by its fertility and riches, by its climate and position, possesses
39 all the elements requisite for prosperity in agriculture, industry, commerce, and navigation.

40
41 The profit which would accrue from the possession of this land stimulated the United States to
42 procure it at any price. But in spite of it, and without the necessity of new acquisitions, they held
43 already in their territories more than two-thirds of their lands uncultivated, because they seemed
44 to be somewhat ill-adapted for agriculture, from sterility, and the extreme and disagreeable
45 temperature at all seasons. This innate propensity of the northern people, also, would scarcely be
46 restrained in exchanging their bleak traits for the smiling climes of the tropic....

1
2 It is a certain fact that Spain had been from the earliest day in the exclusive possession of the
3 province of Texas. It had never struck any one that the limits of Louisiana could extend to this
4 province: a pretext of which the North Americans availed themselves to continue their
5 aggressions by asserting that Louisiana stretched to the Rio Bravo. Such an idea could only be
6 founded in gratuitous suppositions. Therefore, it was evident that for France to sell to the United
7 States this colony, no other rights could be transmitted than those which had been received from
8 Spain.... By the treaty of San Ildefonso, Spain ceded back Louisiana to France with the same
9 limits which she had in her power, and with the same limits it possessed when France held it....
10 Neither at this time under the Spanish sovereignty, nor formerly when possessed by France, nor
11 in subsequent treaties, had it ever been held that Louisiana extended as far as the United States
12 wished afterwards to make it. Its lines had been fixed by the Treaty of Paris, and Mr. Clark
13 himself describes its termination at Red River.

14
15 However, the scheme which the American government proposed was to found its pretensions on
16 this supposition. Moreover, assisted by the facility with which its agents made their explorations
17 and collected facts and dates, it began to claim as part of Louisiana the territory lying between
18 the Mermentau and Sabine rivers.... Intent on their purpose the Americans, in the following years,
19 persisted in perpetrating new acts of aggression and hostility against the province of Texas....
20

21 D. Luis Onís, about the year 1809, was in the United States in the character of Envoy
22 Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from Spain. As soon as he arrived he had endeavored
23 earnestly to restrain these American usurpations, and to make a treaty which would at once end
24 these pending questions between the two countries.... By perseverance to the end of the year
25 1819, he succeeded in having signed at Washington, with the distinguished American, John
26 Quincy Adams, the Secretary of State, the celebrated treaty of the 22d of February. The
27 importance of this document requires that we should pause for a while to examine it. By Article
28 2d, his Catholic Majesty cedes to the United States... West Florida and East Florida. By the 3d,
29 the boundaries of both nations were designated...:
30

31 The boundary line between the two countries, west of the Mississippi, shall begin on the Gulf of
32 Mexico, at the mouth of the river Sabine, in the sea, continuing north, along the western bank of
33 that river, to the 32d degree of latitude; thence, by a line due north, to the degree of latitude
34 where it strikes the Rio Roxo of Natchitoches, or Red River; then following the course of the Rio
35 Roxo westward, to the degree of longitude 100 west from London and 23 from Washington;
36 then, crossing the said Red River, and running thence, by a line due north, to the river Arkansas;
37 thence, following the course of the southern bank of the Arkansas, to its source, in latitude 42
38 north; and thence, by that parallel of latitude, to the South Sea....
39

40 The two high contracting parties agree to cede and renounce all their rights, claims, and
41 pretensions, to the territories described by the said line; that is to say: the United States hereby
42 cede to his Catholic Majesty, and renounce for ever, all their rights, claims and pretensions, to
43 the territories lying west and south of the above-described line; and, in like manner, his Catholic
44 Majesty cedes to the said United States, all his rights, claims, and pretensions, to any territories
45 east and north of the said line; and for himself, his heirs, and successors, renounces all claim to
46 the said territories for ever.

1
2 By this treaty the United States acquired the property in all the disputed territory, that is to say,
3 that situated between Arroyo Hondo and the Sabine. But, as is seen in the last part of the article,
4 they renounced all rights and pretensions over the territory which formerly they had claimed.
5 Before this the injustice of their demands was manifest to every person. The right of Spain was
6 clear and indisputable.... [By this treaty] the United States bound their hands against claiming the
7 territories situated on this side of the Sabine. For, in doing so, they would have to break a solemn
8 treaty, destroy the bonds in which the rights of nations are secured, and destroy the relations of
9 communities, which constitute the great human family.

10
11 A short time after this regulation of differences between Spain and the Republic of Washington,
12 Mexico consummated her independence from the old country, and succeeded, of course, into the
13 full enjoyment of the corresponding rights, over the territories that were thereby emancipated
14 from her dominion. The United States recognised our independence very soon after it was
15 effected....

16
17 The emancipation of our Republic opened a wide door to immigration. They received with open
18 arms the strangers who touched our soil. But the political inexperience of our national governors
19 converted into a fountain of evils a benevolent and purely Christian principle. Immigration,
20 which ought to have equalized the laborious arms to agriculture, manufacture, and commerce,
21 finally resulted in the separation of one of the most important states. It was this which involved
22 us soon in actual, disastrous war.

23
24The legislature of Coahuila, which was also at the time that of Texas, both provinces being
25 united into one state, enacted on the 24th of March, 1825, a law of colonization, in which it was
26 decreed "That all strangers who, in virtue of the general law of the 18th August, 1824, desired to
27 establish themselves on the lands of the State of Coahuila y Texas, were free to do so; and it
28 desired them by this law to consummate it."

29
30 The inhabitants of the United States promptly accepted this invitation, when they perceived the
31 road to prosperity by means of their establishment on the lands ceded to them. They were
32 rejoiced at this, and enjoyed it along with other advantages not to be over looked. In giving away
33 these lands, so far were they from remuneration of any kind, that they stipulated concessions to
34 the colonies, exempting them for ten years from the payment of taxes. Thus with this and other
35 privileges they were freed, by their great distance, from the centre of the troubles and evils to
36 which the other states were victims.... United to Mexico by a tie extremely weak, constituting in
37 the whole of the Republic a heterogeneous mass, in habits, language, and character, and in all
38 parts different, their sympathies were directed towards their own country. The least informed
39 could predict from thence, that, sooner or later, they would prefer a union with their native land
40 to the dependence in which they lived on the Mexican authorities. The colonies of Texas were
41 never subject to our laws. The abolition of slavery decided them to make this known long before
42 the fall of the federal system placed in their hands a banner under whose shade they concealed
43 the views of separation, which by every means they had now brought to a head....

44
45 The object which we aim at is to show that the United States intended to obtain this territory at
46 any price; and to accomplish it introduced there her citizens, taking care to increase the

1 population. Whereby, already in the year 1829, they counted 20,000 inhabitants in that part
2 where formerly they only had 3,000. Their minds were prepared gradually to embrace the first
3 opportunity that might offer to strike the blow....

4
5 The Republic could not remain indifferent to the cry of a rebellion raised within her borders. It
6 endeavored to have order restored in the department in a state of revolt, trying in the first place
7 the conciliatory method of agreement. It proposed to the colonies new advantages, and
8 franchises; among others, that of being exempt for another period of ten years from paying taxes.
9 When it was seen only that every peaceable proposition was discarded, it was decided to declare
10 war, and subject, by actual force, those who were not willing to hear any other argument than the
11 roar of the cannon. The army marched upon Texas; General Santa Anna placed himself at its
12 head; and the campaign opened under the most favorable circumstances.

13
14 The Texans, on their side, prepared to make a vigorous resistance. To sustain it they counted on
15 effectual aid from the United States, which gave protection to them, - covert, indeed, but still
16 decided and constant. Supplies for the war, arms, men, and whatever was requisite, left the most
17 populous cities of the Union to assist the cause of the Texans, while it protested that it observed
18 the most strict neutrality....

19
20 Naturally, these occurrences irritated the relations between both powers, and disturbed the good
21 harmony existing. An explanation was particularly sought...for these offensive proceedings, and
22 it was endeavored to procure an observance of rights under the laws of nations.... Emanuel
23 Eduardo Gorostiza was sent to Washington as Envoy Extraordinary of the Republic. The
24 appropriate demands being made, the American cabinet denied that its intentions were hostile in
25 regard to Mexico. It gave assurances that it had guarded, and would keep guarded, the most
26 complete neutrality....

27
28 While they carried on in Washington these diplomatic disputes, the war continued in Texas,
29 where the Mexican army obtained triumphs constantly until the battle of San Jacinto. In that a
30 defeat was suffered which no one anticipated. Unfortunately for us, acts of cruelty were
31 perpetrated in this campaign not deserving extenuation, such as that of Fanning, the Refugio, and
32 others. But the national censure which fell on their authors proved that they had been viewed
33 with disgust. The responsibility ought to be borne exclusively by those who committed them.
34 Other acts of clemency and humanity frequently repeated in this war and afterwards, exonerate
35 us from the charge which has been made of barbarity and wickedness.

36
37 The United States, always giving out that they had no other object than to defend their threatened
38 frontier, had sent a considerable force, under the orders of General Gaines, to the banks of the
39 Sabine. They authorized him, if necessary, to advance to Nacogdoches, a place situated many
40 leagues on this side of that river, and embraced, without any doubt, within the territory
41 recognized as the Mexican. Events proved that this body of troops was observing the movements
42 and advance of our army, and its general was inclined to move forward or delay doing so,
43 according to the state of the war. But the authority they had given imported an act of aggression
44 upon the Mexican Republic. Our envoy could not see it himself with indifference. Therefore, he
45 made the suitable reclamations upon the subject, and undertook with Forsyth and Dickins,
46 Secretaries of State of the American Government, an energetic correspondence, in which he

1 sustained, with clearness, the rights of the nation he represented. All these efforts, however, were
2 idle. They were evasive in their answers, which did nothing more than embroil the business,
3 without attending to the complaints of Gorostiza. Sometimes they said that the river known by
4 every person to be the Sabine was not the Sabine.... At others they sustained themselves under
5 the pretext of fulfilling the treaty with Mexico, by protecting its territory from the Indians of the
6 United States. The troops, by this, might be sent into the heart itself of Mexico. Again, they
7 doubted if our Republic was in possession of the Texan territory.... Finally, the United States,
8 availing themselves of some finesse which their astute policy suggested, permitted time to glide
9 away, and our minister saw with regret that nothing favorable would be obtained from his
10 repeated remonstrances.

11
12 Moreover, for the most part there was in the conduct of the Secretary of State a want of
13 frankness and good faith with which he ought to have acted.... In answer to his notes they
14 assured him on the 12th July, 1836, that they had nothing certain respecting the movement of
15 General Gaines, and on the...evening before, they had repeated to him the authority to advance to
16 Natchitoches....

17
18 The event so often announced at last happened. The occupation of Natchitoches by the troops of
19 General Gaines consummated the violence to Mexican territory. Thus in a time of peace between
20 the two nations: when the North Americans proclaimed neutrality; when Mexico had given no
21 offense; they penetrated into her territory armed, occupied her places, and took against her an
22 imposing and inimical attitude....

23
24 The wickedness being now discovered with which they proceeded, it would have been criminal
25 to contemplate with indifference the contempt with which they treated us. Our minister then
26 acted with the dignity and firmness which his high character required. He demanded his
27 passports, and returned to Mexico, thus terminating his mission. Next after this appeared the
28 breaking out of hostilities, and the differences between the two nations assumed an alarming
29 aspect....

30
31 The question of justice then only remained, and no doubt was entertained that forthwith we ought
32 to declare war against the neighboring Republic. This was not done nevertheless, from the urgent
33 reasons of the incalculable evils which would flow from the open contest with a powerful nation.
34 We were disposed to let the cloud blow over; and even subsequently, when new causes of
35 complaint were frequently received. Among these may be stated as the principal, the
36 unwarrantable affair of the taking of Monterey in California, by Commodore Jones, which was
37 passed over so as not to interrupt the peace subsisting. Moreover, the means were sought for to
38 give to the United States the guarantees and indemnities which they had in turn demanded....

39
40 On the 12th April, 1844, the President of the United States made a treaty with Texas relative to
41 the incorporation of that country into the Union. This treaty was not ratified by the Senate; the
42 usurpation remained for the present suspended, which was soon, however, effected in a new way.
43 But the step which had been taken in this business was sufficient to do Mexico a new wrong.
44 There might have been noticed at this period some preparations that indicated a sincere wish to
45 carry on the war with Texas, which had for some time past been nothing more in the mouths of
46 our Governors than an excuse for extortion on our unhappy people. The American Minister Mr.

1 Shannon, whether from his really believing the war was positively to be undertaken, or because a
2 pretext was sought to compel Mexico to declare hostilities against the United States, and to make
3 us appear as aggressors, transmitted an official note. In it he made known in the name of his
4 government, that its policy had always been directed to the incorporation of Texas into the
5 American Union, and the invasion which was proposed by Mexico against that Department
6 would now be deemed an offence to the United States.
7

8 In this celebrated communication, which will disgrace for ever the diplomatist who subscribed it,
9 a protest was entered against a war with Texas, while the project of annexation was pending.
10 Here the confession had been made, important for us, that the scheme to obtain this part of our
11 territory had been invariably pursued by all parties, and nearly all the administrations of the
12 Republic of North America, for the space of twenty years.... But the explicit avowal of the
13 Minister Shannon, not denied nor contradicted by the authorities of his country - this avowal, we
14 say, is of the greatest importance, coming from the very mouths of the usurpers who style
15 themselves the most honest before all civilized nations.
16

17 Again, Mexico ought at this time to have broken completely with her deceitful neighbor, and
18 made war wherever her forces would have permitted. Temporizing, however, throughout, our
19 government, in conformity with the justice on which it is founded and guided, hoped that the
20 American Senate would decide upon the project of annexation. As the decision of this body had
21 then been favorable, it continued an intercourse disturbed at present, but still existing between
22 our Republic and the one at Washington. The most that was done was to protest that annexation
23 would be considered as a declaration of war, for it would come to this extremity if it should
24 thereby heap upon us contempt and degradation.
25

26 At this time, more properly than before, it would have been exact justice to have immediately
27 made war on a power that so rashly appropriated what by every title belonged to us. This
28 necessity had increased to a point, that the administrations which had successively been intrusted
29 with our affairs, upon consideration, had all agreed in the principle, that a decree of annexation
30 should be viewed as a casus belli - a cause of war. But while this new injury was being suffered,
31 without deciding anything, but keeping diplomatic relations suspended between both countries,
32 our minister General Almonte, retired from Washington, and the one from the United States did
33 the same from Mexico.
34

35 At the close of the year 1844, a new revolution having overturned the government of General
36 Santa Anna,...elevated to power D. José Joaquín de Herrera, the President of the Council. The
37 famous decree of the 29th of November of that year had ended in disgracing the public officers
38 who had framed it. It had established an unlimited dictatorship, and the war with Texas was, as it
39 had been at other times, the gloss of justice with which they tried to conceal the attack directed
40 against the constitution. A majority of the people distrusted the sincerity of the government,
41 recollecting that the national and indispensable war which they ought to have made in that
42 separate Department had not been preferred to Yucatan, which, without any beneficial result, had
43 been the sacrifice of so many men and so much money. The wish, with rare exceptions, which
44 they expressed, in truth, was for a continuance of the entire power in the hands of General Santa
45 Anna, and this opinion spread through the Republic. In consequence, the people, who detested
46 the oppression, rose against it, overturned it, and gave a triumph to the party known afterwards

1 by the name of the Decembristas.

2
3 The policy which this party pursued differed entirely from that observed by the former
4 administrations. They acted upon the principle, in the firm belief that the Department of Texas
5 had from the year 1830 been lost for ever; from which it was madness to suppose that our
6 victorious eagles could be borne to the other side of the Sabine. They therefore decided on
7 negotiation, and war on no account: for we were wanting in essentials the most indispensable. If
8 the business were managed with able diplomacy, it was thought they might succeed in deriving
9 advantages by no means contemptible; but to proceed by the other way they could anticipate
10 only misfortunes and calamities. The cardinal idea which prevailed in the minds of the
11 government of December, was that by all means the independence of Texas was preferable to
12 annexation with the United States. By the first plan a third nation was placed between us and the
13 aggressor, and would raise up a barrier that would restrain, at least for some time, the irruption
14 with which we were threatened. By the second, it resulted in the loss of all hopes of salvation: for
15 if we remained upon the borders of a territory that our ambitious neighbors considered already
16 their own, at last we would see ourselves involved step by step in a war for which we were not
17 prepared.

18
19 The cry of the parties was raised furiously against the policy adopted; imputations of weakness,
20 treachery, treason, blighted the fame of the rulers, and a clamor was heard for war, declaring it to
21 be the only salvation of the national honor. Among the opposition there were men of the purest
22 patriotism, and others who were guided by the most contracted views and sordid interests.
23 Endearing hopes then animated many Mexicans; the bandage had not yet fallen from their eyes,
24 and they were willing to destroy the hand that undeceived them. Now it is too late to remedy the
25 evil; now the events have occurred, the misfortunes happened, and when they have placed things
26 in their true light, it is the time only that the wisdom and foresight are perceived of the policy of
27 General Herrera's administration.

28
29 Notwithstanding the public clamor raised in opposition, it persisted with firmness in the path
30 proposed to be taken. To the end to open negotiations relating to this object, they formally asked
31 and Congress passed a decree on the 17th May, 1845, conceding authority to it to hear the
32 propositions which Texas had made, and to arrange or conclude a treaty which should be suitable
33 and honorable to the Republic. The propositions presented were the four following: 1st. The
34 independence of Texas was recognised. 2d. Texas agreed not to annex or subject herself to any
35 other country. 3d. Limits and conditions were reserved for a final treaty. 4th. Texas was ready to
36 submit the points in dispute about territories and other subjects to the decision of arbitrators.

37
38 By virtue of the authority granted, our Minister of Relations received the four articles expressed,
39 with preliminaries of a formal and definitive treaty, and intimated that he was disposed to
40 commence negotiations as Texas desired it, and to receive the Commissioner or Commissioners
41 who might be named for that purpose. In a separate note he made the additional declaration, that
42 besides the points proposed, he had others, essential and important, which ought to be also an
43 object of the negotiations; and in case these were frustrated, or if Texas consented directly or
44 indirectly to annexation with the United States, the answer given should be considered as null
45 and void.

1 These preliminaries caused the belief that it would not be difficult to obtain a satisfactory
2 arrangement. But the subsequent conduct of Texas finally resolved itself into annexation with the
3 American Union. Whether it was owing to a breaking with the nation or because an arrangement
4 was incompatible with the motions and revolutions it had against the government of the
5 Decembristas, the negotiations were suspended, and soon this interesting question was left to the
6 fate of arms.

7
8 On the 13th of October, 1845, Mr. Black, the Consul of the United States, transmitted a reserved
9 letter to D. Manuel de la Pe—a y Pe—a, our Minister of Foreign Affairs, copying part of a letter of
10 the Secretary of State of his nation. In this it was proposed that an Envoy, clothed with full
11 power to arrange all controverted questions between the two governments, should be received.
12 The Mexican agreed, requiring, as a condition precedent, that the naval force should withdraw
13 which was off Vera Cruz, and by offering to receive a Commissioner to arrange in a pacific,
14 reasonable and proper mode the pending dispute.

15
16 Thus began anew the negotiations in December, 1845, and the Minister, Mr. John Slidell,
17 presented himself in Mexico. But immediately this difficulty arose, that his government desired
18 him to be received as a Minister Plenipotentiary,...and ours would only admit him as a
19 Commissioner ad hoc for the question of Texas. The settled opinion of the government
20 council...made known with clearness the difference between the two characters. By admitting
21 Mr. Slidell as a common envoy...he might occupy himself with other subjects proper for a
22 Plenipotentiary who exercised his functions near a government with which there were only
23 peaceful relations. By admitting Mr. Slidell as he wished, it resulted also that, without Mexico
24 receiving the satisfaction due to her, diplomatic negotiations would become re-established
25 between both powers; that the business of annexation would be complicated with the pecuniary
26 reclamations; that Mexico would withdraw her hand from making war, and the United States
27 would follow up all the consequent advantages to her commerce and interests.

28
29 This opinion, concluded upon in a cabinet council, was that the agreement to admit a
30 Plenipotentiary of the United States, with special powers to treat upon the subject of Texas, did
31 not oblige Mexico to receive an Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, charged to
32 reside near the government; and in which character Mr. Slidell came, according to his
33 credentials. In conformity with these principles, the administration of General Herrera made
34 them known to the envoy, and refused to receive him. Mr. Slidell insisted on being received on
35 the terms which his government offered, but ours returned a decided negative.

36
37 The year 1846 witnessed at its commencement new rulers figuring in the political drama, having
38 been elevated to power by another revolution. General Paredes pronounced in San Luis against
39 Herrera. A few days were sufficient for this shameful revolution to become a triumph the most
40 complete. Then Mr. Slidell renewed his suit, in considering that, although the old had been
41 terminated by a refusal, still, as the business now went into new hands to be transacted, it was a
42 favorable opportunity to see if he should meet in them a better disposition. The...council of the
43 government...repeated [their] reasons,...concluding with a renewal of the declaration that it could
44 not admit Mr. Slidell further than Plenipotentiary ad hoc for the question of Texas. The
45 government made this known to the Envoy, who now could do no more than ask for his
46 passports, and withdraw from the Republic.

1
2 General Paredes, on the 21st of March of the same year, declared that peace not being
3 compatible with the maintenance of the rights and independence of the nation, he should defend
4 its territory, while the national Congress would undertake to declare war against the United
5 States. The Congress did not go that far; but... authorized [the government] to use the natural
6 defences of the country to repel aggression committed against many of the departments, and to
7 make known to friendly nations the justifiable causes which obliged it to defend its rights by
8 repelling force by force.

9
10 While the United States seemed to be animated by a sincere desire not to break the peace, their
11 acts of hostility manifested very evidently what were their true intentions. Their ships infested
12 our coasts; their troops continued advancing upon our territory, situated at places which under no
13 aspect could be disputed. Thus violence and insult were united: thus at the very time they
14 usurped part of our territory, they offered to us the hand of treachery, to have soon the audacity
15 to say that our obstinacy and arrogance were the real causes of the war.

16
17 To explain the occupation of the Mexican territory by the troops of General Taylor, the strange
18 idea occurred to the United State that the limits of Texas extended to the Rio Bravo del Norte.
19 This opinion was predicated upon two distinct principles: one, that the Congress of Texas had so
20 declared it in December, in 1836; and another, that the river mentioned had been the natural line
21 of Louisiana. To state these reasons is equivalent at once to deciding the matter; for no one could
22 defend such palpable absurdities. The first, which this government prizing its intelligence and
23 civilization, supported with refined malice, would have been ridiculous in the mouth of a child.
24 Whom could it convince that the declaration of the Texas Congress bore a legal title for the
25 acquisition of the lands which it appropriated to itself with so little hesitation? If such a principle
26 were recognized, we ought to be very grateful to these gentlemen senators who had the kindness
27 to be satisfied with so little. Why not declare the limits of the rebel state extended to San Luis, to
28 the capital, to our frontier with Guatemala?

29
30 The question is so clear in itself that it would only obscure by delaying to examine it further. We
31 pass then to the other less nonsensical than the former. In the first place to pretend that the limits
32 of Louisiana came to the Rio Bravo, it was essential to confound this province with Texas, which
33 never can be tolerated.... [T]his same province, and afterwards State of Texas, never had
34 extended its territory to the Rio Bravo, being only to the Nueces, in which always had been
35 established the boundary. Lastly, a large part of the territory situated on the other side of the
36 Bravo, belonged, without dispute or doubt, to other states of the RepublicÑto New Mexico,
37 Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and Chihuahua.

38
39 Then, after so many and such plain proceedings, is there one impartial man who would not
40 consider the forcible occupation of our territory by the North American arms a shameful
41 usurpation? Then further, this power desired to carry to the extreme the sneer and the jest. When
42 the question had resolved itself into one of force which is the ultima ratio of nations as well as of
43 kings, when it had spread desolation and despair in our populations, when many of our citizens
44 had perished in the contest, the bloody hand of our treacherous neighbors was turned to present
45 the olive of peace. The Secretary of State, Mr. Buchanan, on the 27th of July, 1846, proposed
46 anew, the admission of an Envoy to open negotiations which might lead to the concluding of an

1 honorable peace. The national government answered that it could not decide, and left it to
2 Congress to express its opinion of the subject. Soon to follow up closely the same system of
3 policy, they ordered a commissioner with the army, which invaded us from the east, to cause it to
4 be understood that peace would be made when our opposition ceased. Whom did they hope to
5 deceive with such false appearances? Does not the series of acts which we have mentioned speak
6 louder than this hypocritical language? By that test then, as a question of justice, no one who
7 examines it in good faith can deny our indisputable rights. Among the citizens themselves, of the
8 nation which has made war on us, there have been many who defended the cause of the Mexican
9 Republic. These impartial defenders have not been obscure men, but men, of the highest
10 distinction. Mexico has counted on the assistance, ineffectual, unfortunately, but generous and
11 illustrious, of a Clay, an Adams, a Webster, a Gallatin; that is to say, on the noblest men, the
12 most appreciated for their virtues, for their talents, and for their services. Their conduct deserves
13 our thanks, and the authors of this work have a true pleasure in paying, in this place, the sincere
14 homage of their gratitude.

15
16 Such are the events that abandoned us to a calamitous war....

17
18 From the acts referred to, it has been demonstrated to the very senses, that the real and effective
19 cause of this war that afflicted us was the spirit of aggrandizement of the United States of the
20 North, availing itself of its power to conquer us. Impartial history will some day illustrate for
21 ever the conduct observed by this Republic against all laws, divine and human, in an age that is
22 called one of light, and which is, notwithstanding, the same as the formerNone of force and
23 violence.

24
25
26
27 **Source:** Albert C. Ramsey, ed., *The Other Side: Or Notes for the History of the War Between Mexico and the United States* (New York, 1850), pp. 1-13;
28 16-32.